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Docket No. 3782.00

IN THE APPLICATION

OF

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AND

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FOR A

SKI CARRIER

SKI CARRIER

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to package and article carriers carried by an animate bearer.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Moving skiing equipment from place to place has always been a difficult undertaking. Being bulky and lacking handles, skiing equipment is hard to grasp and maneuver through tight spots like doorways and crowded sidewalks. Often, skis, poles and boots are banged into solid objects or dropped upon the ground so as to be damaged, necessitating an expensive repair.

Some have proposed strap-type handles and harnesses for carrying ski equipment. Others have proposed backpacks for doing the same. While these sorts of carriers are used by many skiers, they have drawbacks. For example, strap-type carriers occupy one or both of a skier's hands during their use. The known backpacks, on the other hand, do not balance their burden particularly well, making slips and falls more likely, and are themselves unwieldy.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In light of the problems associated with the known apparatus and methods for toting skiing equipment about, it is a principal object of the invention to provide a carrier of compact size that is capable of transporting skis upon the back of a skier in a balanced fashion. The

carrier can also be employed to move ski boots and ski poles if desired. When not in use, the carrier can be rolled up and stored in an out-of-the-way place like the glove box of an automobile.

It is another object of the invention to provide a ski carrier of the type described that is easy and intuitive to use. A skier can, in seconds and without instruction or tools of any sort, secure skis, boots, and poles within the ski carrier and walk away with all in complete comfort and with his hands free.

It is an object of the invention to provide improved elements and arrangements thereof in a ski carrier for the purposes described which is lightweight in construction, inexpensive to manufacture, and dependable in use.

Briefly, the ski carrier in accordance with this invention achieves the intended objects by featuring an hourglass-shaped pad having a pair of shoulder straps fastened to the pad so that the pad can be carried like a backpack. To the bottom of the pad is secured a first pair of fabric loops for receiving a pair of skis and catching the bindings of the skis. A second pair of fabric loops is secured to the top of the pad for grasping the skis at points above the bindings.

Each of the second pair of loops is provided with a releasable fastener so that such loops can be selectively opened. A belt is provided at the narrowed center portion of the hourglass-shaped pad for encircling and further retaining the skis. A lanyard extends from the top of the pad and carries a ring at its free end to which can be secured a boot-carrying harness.

The foregoing and other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become readily apparent upon further review of the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention may be more readily described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is an elevational view of a ski carrier in accordance with the present invention with the portion located to the left of the centerline depicting the rear of the ski carrier and the portion located to the right of the centerline depicting the front of the ski carrier.

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a boot harness for use with the ski carrier of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the ski carrier and boot harness supporting skiing equipment upon the back of a user.

Similar reference characters denote corresponding features consistently throughout the accompanying drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to the FIGS., a ski carrier in accordance with the present invention is shown at 10. Carrier 10 includes a pad 12 having at its bottom a first pair of loops 14 for receiving a pair of skis 16 and catching the bindings 18 of skis 16. A second pair of loops 20 is secured at the top of pad 12 for grasping skis 16 at points above bindings 18. Loops 20 are

provided with releasable fasteners 22 so that such may be selectively opened for removing skis 16. A boot-carrying harness 24 can be secured to a lanyard 26 extending from the top of pad 12 between loops 20. A belt 28 with a releasable fastener 30 is provided at the narrowed waist portion 32 of pad 12 to selectively encircle and retain skis 16. A pair of shoulder straps 34 is fastened to pad 12 so that pad 12 can be carried like a backpack.

Pad 12 is made from two or more pieces of fabric cut in an hourglass shape and sewn back to back so as to reinforce one another. The hourglass shape provides pad 12 with a wide, shoulder portion 36 at its top and a wide, hip portion 38 at its bottom that are joined together by intermediate, hip portion 32 of relatively narrow width. The shoulder and hip portions 36 and 38 evenly and comfortably distribute loads to the back 40 of a user as illustrated in FIG. 3.

Each of loops 14 comprises an elongated strip of fabric sewn at its opposite ends to hip portion 38. One loop 14 is positioned on each side of the centerline CL of pad 12 for balancing skis 16. The gaps between the loops 14 and pad 12 form openings into which the rear ends of skis 16 can be located. Since bindings 18 on skis 16 are larger than the openings provided by loops 14, bindings 18 hang upon loops 14 and permit skis 16 to be suspended from carrier 10.

Each of loops 20 comprises a pair of elongated strips of fabric 42 and 44 sewn at their inner ends to shoulder portion 36. As with loops 14, one loop 20 is positioned on each side of centerline CL for balancing skis 16. One portion 22a of releasable fastener 22 is secured to each fabric strip 42 and comprises a piece of loop-type fastening material that is coextensive with each fabric strip 42. As is well known, loop-type fastening material is also known as "Velcro" pile material and has a dense mat of small, uncut loops formed a thread.

Another portion 22b of releasable fastener 22 is secured to each fabric strip 44 and is coextensive therewith. Portion 22b comprises a piece of hook-type fastening material, a.k.a. "Velcro" hook material, having a plurality of transverse lines of hooks spaced along its length. The ends of the hooks are turned inwardly so as to catch in the loops of portion 22a when fastening portions 22a and 22b are pressed together. Since fastening portions 22a and 22b extend the length of strips 42 and 44, portions 22a and 22b can be fastened together at various points. Thus, loops 20 can be variably sized to accommodate skis 16 of different widths and thicknesses.

Belt 28 comprises a pair of elongated strips of webbing 48 and 50 sewn at their inner ends to the opposite sides of waist portion 32. One portion 30a of releasable fastener 30 is secured to webbing strip 48 and comprises a piece of loop-type fastening material that is coextensive with webbing strip 48 having a dense mat of small, uncut loops formed a thread. Another portion 30b of releasable fastener 30 is secured to the length of webbing strip 50 and comprises a piece of hook-type fastening material having a plurality of transverse lines of hooks. Because portions 30a and 30b extend along the length of webbing strips 48 and 50, portions 30a and 30b can be fastened together at various points to vary the opening formed between belt 28 and pad 12 to accommodate skis 16 of different dimensions.

A shoulder strap 34 is secured to pad 12 so as to connect the outer ends of shoulder portion 36 and hip portion 38 on each side of centerline CL. Each shoulder strap 34 includes a first webbing part 52 sewn at its inner end to the top of pad 12 and a second webbing part 54 sewn to the bottom of pad 12. Second webbing part 54 carries a buckle 56 at its outer end. The

outer end of first webbing part 52 is wound through buckle 56 so that each shoulder strap 34 can be varied in terms of its length to accommodate users of different stature.

Lanyard 26 extends from shoulder portion 36 on centerline CL. Lanyard 26 is made from an elongated strip of fabric that is sewn at its inner end to pad 12. The outer end of lanyard 26 carries a ring 58 to which boot-carrying harness 24 can be releasably secured.

Boot-carrying harness 24 includes a pair of boot retainers 60 suspended from a fastening ring 62. Each boot retainer 60 has a vertical band of webbing 64 sized to encircle a ski boot 66 from top to bottom. A horizontal band of webbing 68 is secured to the midpoint of vertical band of webbing 64 and is sized to encircle the ankle-supporting portion of ski boot 66. Horizontal band of webbing 68 is provided with a releasable fastener 70 along its length having a hook type fastening portion 70a and a loop type fastening portion 70b so that horizontal band of webbing 68 can be selectively opened to permit the entry and removal of a boot 66 into a boot retainer 60. Vertical bands of webbing 64 are extended through a pair of wire circles 72 that are positioned on fastening ring 62. Fastening ring 62 has a spring-biased toggle 74 that permits fastening ring 62 to be selectively opened and interlocked with ring 58 on lanyard 26.

The use of ski carrier 10 is straightforward. First, the rear ends of skis 16 are extended into loops 14 one at a time until stopped by bindings 18. Then, skis 16 are oriented so that they crisscross one another adjacent waist portion 32 of pad 12 and their front ends overlap loops 20. (Note: the crisscrossed configuration of skis 16 provide a balanced load to ski carrier 10 and space the front and rear ends of skis 16 away from the head and legs of a user of ski carrier 10 so that movement of the user is not substantially impeded by carrier 10.) Next, fastening

portions 22a and 22b are joined together so that each of loops 20 snugly encircles a ski 16. Once both skis 16 have been placed in loops 14 and 20, a user may position ski poles (not shown) adjacent one of skis 16 atop waist portion 32. Now, belt 28 is positioned around skis 16 by joining fastening portions 30a and 30b together. Finally, boots 66 are positioned within retainers 60 and harness 24 is joined to lanyard 26 by joining rings 58 and 62 together. Ski carrier 10 can now be donned in the manner of the backpack and used to conveniently transport skis 16 and boots 66 from place to place.

When it is decided that skis 16 and boots 66 should be used for their intended purpose, ski carrier 10 is doffed and skis 16 and boots 66 are disengaged from ski carrier 10 by reversing the steps outlined in the previous paragraph. The entire process requires just a few minutes to complete under even the most adverse circumstances. The empty ski carrier 10 can be rolled up and placed in a jacket pocket or other convenient location for subsequent use. Should ski carrier 10 ever become soiled, it can be washed with soap and water or a mild detergent in a conventional manner.

While the invention has been described with a high degree of particularity, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that modifications may be made thereto. Therefore, it is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the sole embodiment described above, but encompasses any and all embodiments within the scope of the following claims.